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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 000220

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TAGS: PGOV MARR KDEM IV  
SUBJECT: FATE OF THE COMZONES MAY BE STALLING OUAGA IV

REF: A. ABIDJAN 104  
B. ABIDJAN 68

Classified By: PolEcon Chief Silvia Eiriz for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Implementation of the fourth supplementary agreement (Ouaga IV) to the Ouagadougou Political Agreement (OPA) is proving challenging, particularly with regard to the fate of the comzones. The Office of the OPA Facilitator's Special Representative told Poloff that, according to Ouaga IV, the comzones cannot remain in command positions. The Prime Minister's legal advisor told Poloff that the FAFN must continue to be recognized as an army until a new national army is set up. She said the comzones would leave their commands since their troops will be brought into the Integrated Command Center (ICC), but that they will become members of the FAFN general staff in Bouake. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The ceremony to mark the transfer of power from the Forces Nouvelles (FAFN) to the prefects in the areas of the country under FAFN control, scheduled to take place on March 4, has not yet been re-scheduled. A difference of opinion, whether real or contrived, seems to exist between the FAFN and President Gbagbo's camp regarding what the Ouaga IV accord envisions as the role to be played by the Zone Commanders (comzones). President Gbagbo held a meeting on March 23 with security and defense forces to draw up a timeline for Ouaga IV and the ICC met on March 27 to move this process forward. Gbagbo was scheduled to meet again with security and defense forces on March 30, but the meeting was postponed. Affoussy Bamba, the Prime Minister's legal advisor, told Poloff on March 31 that Gbagbo called Prime Minister Soro after the conclusion of the ICC meeting to cancel the appointment. She also said that the official reason given by the Ministry of Interior for postponement of the transfer ceremony was the fact that President Gbagbo has created a handful of new departments throughout the country over the last year and prefects had not yet been appointed for these new administrative divisions. Their nominations have just been announced.

Transfer of Power Linked to ICC Deployment

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¶3. (C) Daouda Diallo, Political Advisor to Ambassador Badini, the OPA Facilitator's Special Representative, told Poloff on March 27 that President Compaore has sent a clear message to the OPA signatories that the transfer of power between the comzones and the prefects must take place. Diallo said the FAFN have finally given the Facilitator the names of the 4,000 troops that are to be deployed with government police and gendarmes in ICC brigades. Diallo said the transfer of power from the comzones to the prefects must occur concurrently with the deployment of these mixed ICC units. Diallo indicated there was a difference of opinion about whether the ICC mixed units would be deployed in the areas under FAFN control and that President Gbagbo has made it clear that he wants them to be deployed nationwide.

Comzones Can't Command Any More

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¶4. (C) Diallo told Poloff that Ouaga IV does not provide for the comzones to continue as military commanders while they

turn over administrative duties to the prefects. He said it is up to the FAFN to figure out what to do with them until the peace process is completed.

¶ 15. (C) Affoussy Bamba, legal advisor to the Prime Minister, told Poloff on March 31 that since the FAFN troops will be integrated into the ICC, the comzones have no soldiers to command. She said the FAFN plan to have the comzones attached to the FAFN general staff. Bamba noted that Ouaga IV recognizes two armies: the FAFN and the national army (FANCI). Bamba told Poloff that the FAFN will continue to exist as an army until the country's new army is set up one month after the presidential inauguration. Bamba described the ICC with its mixed brigades of FAFN and FANCI troops as a "transitory" army that is the embryo of the new national army.

¶ 16. (C) Comment. It is unclear to Embassy whether the FAFN and Gbagbo camp negotiators really came away from Ouaga IV with different interpretations of the text or whether misunderstandings continue to arise because one or both sides could not sell the deal they agreed to in Ouagadougou to the rank and file. The recognition of the FAFN as an army has always been critical for the FAFN; otherwise they are just a band of treasonous rebels. Having the FAFN continue to exist as an army until the creation of the new national army may well be a non-negotiable point for the FAFN. Whether the comzones have actually agreed to give up their command positions and work in the FAFN staff in Bouake remains to be seen, and the ICC exists in name only. The notion that there are military officers ready and waiting to take over command of their troops is a fiction. What is clear is that the OPA signatories are once again grappling with the very thorny military issues that have stymied the peace process for so long.

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